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- The new “Red-Green” alliance

DOING OUR BIT!

In our modest way, the SIF keeps its end up in the battle for liberty. As readers of this issue of *The Individual* will see, two of our leading members have recently had their say in public.

SIF chairman Michael Plumbe had a brief but powerful letter in *The Times* regarding Peter Tatchell’s latest brush with the less civilised elements that we share this world with. Whatever one may think about some of Tatchell’s views and activities—I make plain from my own article I am far from an unalloyed admirer—his struggle for “gay rights” is at least in part genuinely a struggle for the sort of personal liberty that the SIF exists to support.

As I have written before, even in these days of blogs “letters to the editor” remain a cost-effective way of getting a message across provided that it’s done well.

Meanwhile, at a rather more exalted level, SIF president Lord Monson made a telling and humorous contribution to the latest in what seems to be a never-ending stream of “nanny state” proposals, this time concern-

ing alcohol labelling.

Lord Monson’s speech may have contained humour, but there is something profoundly sinister about all of this. When the state’s representatives feel that they have to state explicitly what any decent person ought to know by way of a civilised upbringing—e.g. that it’s a very stupid thing to get blind drunk every evening—it says much about the demoralisation and infantilisation of our fellows. Again, we recall the SIF’s motto and aim: “To promote responsible individual freedom”. They go hand-in-hand.

Finally, I’d like to take this opportunity to note the launch earlier this year of the SIF’s new-look website. The address remains the same—see the back page—but we decided to “invest”—i.e. “spend” in old-fashioned and proper language—in a complete remodelling by a professional company. All comments have been positive, so please “drop by” in cyberspace and say “hello”!

Nigel Meek

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THE BIG LIE OR MANY SMALLER LIES? THE CAREER AND IMPACT OF WILLI MÜNZENBERG

Dr Helen Szamuely

Creating False History

Here is an interesting question for readers. Who burnt down the Reichstag in 1933? Can you recall the name of Marinus van der Lubbe, the somewhat crazed Dutchman, who actually set it on fire? And even if you can, do you not think that there was somebody behind it all? After all, it could not be just a lone lunatic, could it?

It would be interesting to know how many of those who read the above paragraph nodded and said, "Of course, Hitler ordered and manipulated van der Lubbe (assuming you can recall the name) and then used the fire to get rid of the opposition and to blame the Communists."

I am willing to bet that nobody said, "Oh yes, it was the Communists and they managed to get away with it because Dimitrov's trial (assuming you can recall that name) was unsuccessful. Hitler merely took advantage of the event."

That, ladies and gentlemen, is the difference between good and bad propaganda.

The truth is that van der Lubbe did act on his own. This has been investigated and proved by a number of historians. No evidence has been found of anybody else's involvement. Further, Hitler did take advantage of the fire to do what he had always planned to do and destroy the remnants of German democratic parliament and ban the Communist Party of which the Nazis were oddly afraid. All of that is true.

Now we come to the battle of the propagandists. Everyone, but everyone, quotes Dr Göbbels's comment about the big lie and compares every would-be spin doctor with him. But who actually believed Göbbels? A large proportion of the German people for a time and some supporters in other countries who wanted to believe him.

As opposed to that, millions of people across the world repeat certain "truths" for which

there is "full agreement" without once realizing that it is propaganda first started by that genius of spin doctoring and promoter of the Comintern, Willi Münzenberg, without even knowing his name or comparing any tuppenny-ha'penny press officer to him. Now that is propaganda. Sheer genius. Achieved by a long list of small and medium-sized lies.

Back to the Reichstag fire. It occurred on the night of the 27th February 1933 and the perpetrator was not hard to identify. Van der Lubbe, a supposed Communist and an unemployed bricklayer, clearly mentally disturbed (though the assumption that he was actually mentally defective comes from his obviously drugged state during the trial and a great deal of Communist propaganda), was found inside the building.

The following day the recently elected Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, went to see the President, Hindenburg, who signed an order that closed down all non-Nazi parties and banned the Communist one.

A few days later the Gestapo arrested four Communists, intending to try them with Van der Lubbe. Ernst Togler was a senior member of the KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschland, German Communist Party), one of those who had not managed to escape. An arrest warrant was issued for him immediately and he surrendered himself to the police, something the KPD would later hold against him.

The other three were Bulgarians: Georgi Dimitrov, Vasil Tanev and Blagoi Popov, members of the Comintern.

What the Gestapo had not realized was that Dimitrov was the head of the West European section of the Comintern and, thus, a close adviser of Stalin's, one of the few people the latter would make an effort for. Normally Communist parties and their members would be sacrificed without a blink of an eyelid.

In addition, the man who had been charged to promote the cause of the Soviet Union and the Communist International through apparently

**"But who actually
believed Göbbels?"**

innocuous publications, Willi Münzenberg, was reasonably anxious to become involved.

Willi Münzenberg

Münzenberg was a German Communist, one of the few from a working class background. He was a deputy in the Reichstag and the owner of two newspapers and a publishing firm. He was also the most skilled propagandist the Soviet Union and its cause ever had.

He did not write propaganda, he organized it, setting up hundreds of committees, using front organizations to run other front organizations, inspiring intellectuals to become fellow travelers and to manipulate other, innocent and ignorant intellectuals. In other words, he was the man who created the atmosphere in which it is considered to be normal to be on the left of the spectrum and intensely moral to support some of the worst tyrants in the world, as long as they seem to be a left-wing cause.

As Stephen Koch, author of *Double Lives* wrote in the *New Criterion*:

"He wanted to instil the feeling, like a truth of nature, that seriously to criticize or challenge Soviet policy was the unfailing mark of a bad, bigoted, and probably stupid person, while support was equally infallible proof of a forward-looking mind committed to all that was best for humanity and marked by an uplifting refinement of sensibility."

Before 1933 he had been enormously successful in his organizational activity with his biggest achievement being the Sacco-Vanzetti case or, rather, the political activity around it. He took the case of two obscure Italian anarchists who had been accused of robbery and murder (of which Sacco was almost certainly guilty and Vanzetti possibly innocent) and turned it into a left-wing cause célèbre, achieving two things.

The campaign pulled together disparate left-wing and well-meaning individuals and organizations under covert Communist control, in the process destroying the anarchist movement in the United States.

Secondly, it countered the potent myth of the Open Door and the American Dream for immigrants, a rival myth to that of the Soviet

utopia, by creating an image of America of a murderous, xenophobic society that destroys innocent immigrants if they happen to have the wrong political view.

We can date the irrational anti-Americanism so prevalent in Britain, Europe and the American left from that campaign. Münzenberg's work lives on.

In the months leading up to Hitler taking power the entire KPD behaved with exemplary foolishness, underestimating the Nazis and concentrating on internal dissent, purges and the fight with the Social-Democrats. Münzenberg was part of that mess.

Immediately after the Hindenburg decree he fled to Paris where he began to organize a counter-offensive.

The Brown Book

Its first aspect was *The Brown Book*, followed later on by *The Second Brown Book*. Münzenberg mobilized many of the West's intellectuals whom he had already enmeshed in his network or the Münzenberg Trust as it was known, to support this endeavour. Names of others, such as Albert Einstein, who protested, were simply added.

The Brown Book was probably written largely by Willi's henchman and probable NKVD agent, the Czech Communist Otto Katz, who may well have been involved later on in Masaryk's "defenestration". Subsequently, the grateful Communist government of Czechoslovakia put him on trial together with Rudolf Slánský in the great show trial of 1952. (Incidentally, the trials of the tortured and pressurized accused were filmed and shown. Their self-abasement was made public at the time and later.)

Katz, the ruthless manipulator and brilliant propaganda writer, was accused of Zionism and espionage, confessed to all his "crimes" and begged to be executed as he had no right to live. His masters obliged and he was hanged.

As Stephen Koch, author of *Double Lives* and Sean McMeekin, author of *The Red Millionaire*, Münzenberg's biography, have noted, *The Brown Book* so highly praised at the time and so valued by various historians, was largely a pack of lies. In fact, the lies were not really substantiated and only self-imposed hypnosis

"Münzenberg ... was the most skilled propagandist the Soviet Union and its cause ever had."

could have made all those writers and reviewers swoon with praise at the time.

There were three parts to the book. The first one told inaccurately of the Nazi rise to power, blaming largely the Social-Democrats and, naturally enough, being rather reticent about the war the KPD waged on the Social-Democrats and the Weimar democracy in general.

The second part dealt with Nazi oppression in general and was, as Sean McMeekin puts it, “intuitively correct”, though short on facts. *The Brown Book* emphasised oppression as it affected left-wing parties and individuals, not those dreadful people, capitalists, under which rubric came anyone who did not support the KPD.

Nor was there anything about the growing persecution of Jews. Instead of giving examples, the book and its supposed author merely quoted Lenin’s attack on rich and powerful Zionists, adding quite dishonestly that rich German Jews had not felt any discomfort under the Nazis. In fact, there was a great deal of indignation that the Nazis accused various non-Jewish left-wing and, above all, Communist activists of being that.

How ironic that the real author of this document should have ended his life as a “Zionist spy”. Communist history is full of ironies of this kind.

The third part dealt with the Reichstag fire and produced the accusations that it was organized by the Nazis, specifically by Göring. To prove this there were fraudulent charts and “photographs” produced that showed a network of subterranean passages through which the Nazis could have entered while Van der Lubbe was torching the place, to give him a hand.

To top the accusations, there were clear innuendos that van der Lubbe was the SA Chief Ernst Röhm’s catamite, possibly a sexual toy boy to the SA in general.

Even at the time this was thin and has since been disproved quite categorically by, among others, Fritz Tobias in his 1964 book, *The Reichstag Fire*. No other writer has produced any evidence to back the half-baked assertions of *The Brown Book* and *The Second Brown Book*. They have, nevertheless, penetrated into popular psyche to quite an astonishing degree.

The London Counter-Trial

Münzenberg’s other ploy was the London counter-trial, the template for many other subsequent “trials”. It was timed to open the day the Leipzig trial of Van der Lubbe, Dimitrov and the others was to start, the 21st September 1933.

The counter-trial was chaired by D.N. Pritt KC, barrister and member of the Labour Party, who was also one of the leading fellow travellers. In subsequent years he would use his standing as a barrister and a “silk” to explain why the Soviet show trials were legally entirely correct and how the guilt of the accused had been proved beyond any reasonable doubt.

The other “judges” were Maître Pierre Vermeulen of Belgium, George Branting of Sweden, Maître Vincent de Moro-Giafferi and Maître Gaston Bergery of France, Betsy Bakker-Nort of the Netherlands, Vald Hvidt of Denmark and Arthur Garfield Hays of the United States.

The lawyers, except for Pritt, complained about the atmosphere in the “court room”, the pressure under which they were put by Münzenberg, the lack of evidence and the laughable testimony produced by friends of Willi wearing SA uniforms and masks.

For all of that, the counter-trial was a huge success. After a week’s deliberation it came to the conclusion it started with, that the fire had been initiated by Göring and carried out by SA officers, with Van der Lubbe, probably a homosexual lover of one or more of them, lined up as the fall guy. This was, astonishingly enough, accepted by all the *bien pensants* and many other well-meaning people.

Meanwhile, the real trial, in Leipzig was also a success for the Comintern. Dimitrov, a superb speaker, dispensed with his defence lawyer and used the four month long trial to proclaim repeatedly his and his comrades’ innocence and the Nazis’ guilt as well as the guilt of all those who did not support the Communist line.

Van der Lubbe, by now probably heavily drugged, drooling and giggling, continued to insist (in so far as he could insist anything) that he did it all by himself to call attention to the problems of the German workers.

“In subsequent years [Pritt] would use his standing as a barrister... to explain why the Soviet show trials were legally entirely correct...”

On the 21st December 1933 the trial came to an end. Van der Lubbe was found guilty and subsequently executed. The charges against the others were dismissed for lack of evidence, something that would not have happened under Stalin and did not happen at the counter-trial.

Ernst Tugler was kept in "protective custody" until 1935, then released. He was purged from the KPD because of his surrender to the police, went abroad and worked in Belgium, returning later to work, according to him under duress, for the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda. He survived until the early sixties.

Dimitrov, Tanev and Popov returned to the Soviet Union in February 1934, almost exactly a year after the fire to a hero's welcome.

Why were the charges dismissed? One theory is that the German courts were still sufficiently independent not to bow to pressure from the Nazi hierarchy. This is not impossible.

Another aspect of the story is the arrest of seven German airmen who were undergoing training secretly in the Soviet Union. They were released after the Bulgarians had been acquitted and sent back to the USSR. It is hard to dismiss the notion of some agreement there. Stephen Koch thinks that the agreement went deeper and the whole Leipzig trial was a put-up job, with both Hitler and Stalin seizing the opportunity they were presented with.

Back in the USSR Dimitrov became head of the Comintern and a fervent Stalinist, though Robert Conquest mentions in *The Great Terror* that he, unusually, tried to save some of his Bulgarian comrades during the purge and may, even, have succeeded with one.

Whether he tried to save his co-defendants is unclear but, in any case, he did not succeed. Both Popov and Tanev disappeared into the Gulag, with only the first of them emerging after many years.

Dimitrov eventually became the Prime Minister of Communist Bulgaria and died in 1949 while on holiday in the Soviet Union. Rumours of him having been poisoned or irradiated have persisted ever since. It is true that

Stalin had been displeased with his secret negotiations with Tito.

The "End" of Münzenberg

And what of Münzenberg, the evil genius, the man who created the modern intellectual atmosphere, who unknown to most and working in the shadows, consolidated Western opinion about at least two crucial events?

Alas, he did not live long enough to see the network he had set up of front organizations, fellow travellers and agents of various kind achieving their biggest success of demonizing Senator Joseph McCarthy and all who were associated with him and turning the Communist agents he had tried to uncover into martyrs. That opinion, too, persists to this day, as witnessed by the completely untruthful *Good Night and Good Luck* made by George Clooney and despite the research of such people as Ronald and Allis Radosh, authors of *Red Star Over Hollywood* and the Yale University series of published documents about American Communist activity. Another triumph for the real propaganda.

Willi, however, had no more triumphs after 1933 though he continued to weave his spider's web for a while. From 1935 on he watched his various friends and comrades disappear into Stalin's prisons to reappear in show trials. He was purged from the KPD and in 1938 he broke with Stalin.



Willi Münzenberg

He then spent two years talking to British and French agents, explaining to them the truth or as much of the truth as he was prepared to divulge about the Soviet Union and the Comintern. He also started making plans for another propaganda campaign some time in the future, a left-wing anti-Soviet one. Many of his ideas were taken up after the war by the organizations and publications that came out under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom but Willi did not live to see that either.

He did carry out one coup against Stalin. Soon after the Nazi-Soviet Pact he published the names of 40 German Communists who had been murdered in Soviet prisons.

In early 1940 he was interned in France with

"Soon after the Nazi-Soviet Pact he published the names of 40 German Communists who had been murdered in Soviet prisons."

all other German citizens. He had been advised to submit to that rather than try to escape by a couple of British agents he had been in touch with. Unfortunately, apart from the fact that Willi must have been watched by the NKVD, this was the period when the various British security services played unwilling host to a number of Soviet agents.

As the French surrender drew closer those in internment camps were either released or allowed to escape. Münzenberg headed off with a group southwards but reaching Montalou separated from the main group with three others, promising to return later. None was seen again. One, Hartig, a supposed left-wing social-democrat, turned up later in Paris and worked with the Nazis. Two other young men, who had made enormous efforts to befriend Willi, vanished.

This was the 21st June 1940, the day of France's surrender. In October of that year, a body was found in the woods nearby of a man who had been hanged but as the rope had snapped, he had fallen under the tree. The body was in a very bad state of decomposition but papers in his pocket showed that this was, indeed, the former propaganda chief of the Comintern.

Some people think of it as a suicide but most assume that the two young men were working for the NKVD who wanted Willi dead and who accomplished the crime, possibly with the help of the Gestapo.

In any case, what matters is the evil that he did, which lives on. Few people know the name of Willi Münzenberg or that of his henchman Otto Katz. Yet over several decades millions across the world have repeated "truths" and opinions that had been created for them by these two. Not many people believed Dr Göbbels's "big lie" but too many still believe the medium lies that were piled up by the Comintern.

Successful Propaganda versus Mere Spin

We can see this with the successful propaganda coups of today. I am not, as it happens, talking about NuLab's or Blair's spin machine of recent years, as unsuccessful an operation as anyone has ever seen. Every single spin is known immediately to the media and those who follow politics. What use is that to anyone?

It is a big mistake to suppose that it was the spin machine that ensured Blair's three elections. It was actually the Conservative Party whose own attempts at spin or propaganda are too pathetic even to discuss.

No, I am talking of the saga we have followed on *EU Referendum* blog (www.eureferendum.blogspot.com) as did others, such as Charles Johnson on *Little Green Footballs* (www.littlegreenfootballs.com) and Michelle Malkin on her blog (www.michellemalkin.com), the carefully staged pictures and videos in Jenin, Gaza and Lebanon by terrorist organizations whose leaders had been trained in the Soviet Union, as it happens.

Soviet training would have included the use of propaganda as a battle tool and, on the whole, it is a pity that the Israelis have not undergone the same process. Between them Hamas (until they started fighting Fatah) and Hezbollah have shown themselves to be past masters at the game, helped, of course, by that public sphere of opinion created in the first place by Willi Münzenberg.

The question that needs to be asked is the degree of involvement on the part of the media and other agents of influence who are using the staged pictures and videos to promote the cause of the supposed victims of Israeli aggression (which, of course, is backed by the Americans).

When Münzenberg spun his web he distinguished for his own purposes between those who were witting and those who were unwitting accomplices. The latter he called "innocents" and referred to with great contempt. But he knew for certain that his words would not become the truth for so many if those unwitting accomplices were not active.

Was the media a witting or unwitting accomplice then and is it now? Some journalists knew exactly what they were doing, as did some lawyers, academics, writers and political activists. They may have pretended to be merely men and women of the left, often of the moderate left, but were, in actual fact, Communist agents of different kinds.

Let us recall that none of those accused by Senator McCarthy or the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) were innocent, even if they lied when confronted. Interestingly, none used the defence that

"It is a big mistake to suppose that it was the spin machine that ensured Blair's three election."

would have shown them to be genuinely well-meaning, that of freedom of speech. Many Hollywood supporters of the infamous ten were disgusted by the fact that, instead of admitting to their political views and pleading the First rather than the Fifth Amendment, they lied, continuing to play the Communist Party's games.

Surely, nobody can possibly look at the pictures from Qana and see the media as unwitting accomplices. How could they watch those carefully staged shots and not know that they were being manipulated into purveyors of propaganda?

Then again, few of them can believe in the

cause that they are promoting, in the way Willi did to the end of his life. One wonders what Willi would have said of them. Somehow, I suspect it would have been seriously rude.



This essay is based on postings on to the *EU Referendum* blog (www.eureferendum.blogspot.com) and the *Conservative History* blog (<http://conservativehistory.blogspot.com>) and is published here in hardcopy for the first time. Dr Szamuely is the co-author of *EU Referendum*, and editor of the *Conservative History Journal* (available in hardcopy) and main author of *Conservative History* blog.



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A BLOODY MISALLIANCE: RADICAL ISLAM AND INFANTILE MARXISM

Dr Philip Bounds

The Grotesque Alliance

Metaphorical references to “borders” and “frontiers” have been a staple part of Western culture since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. If the dreadful events in New York and Washington achieved nothing else, they made it uncomfortably clear that the border between Islam and the West was far more porous than we previously supposed. It is no longer possible for even the most purblind Westerner to believe that Islam is something which happens “over there” in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Nearly everyone recognises that it has

now established a significant and perhaps immoveable presence in the heartlands of the West, bringing much that is beneficial and much that is ugly in its wake. There are now at least two million Muslims in the USA and a staggering 53 million in Europe. The issue of how the “host communities” should relate to them is one of the most important in international politics. Should the border between Muslims and non-Muslims be pushed back, heavily guarded or even dismantled altogether? The coming decades will tell.

One of the most disheartening aspects of the

interchange between Islam and the West is also one of the least noticed. Over the course of the last five years, largely as a consequence of the Western intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, we have seen the emergence of a grotesque alliance between militant Islamists and certain sections of the Marxist left.¹ Devout followers of Muhammad and excitable disciples of Leon Trotsky have joined together to oppose the wars and even to found new political parties and movements. This process has probably gone furthest in some of the most culturally diverse regions of Britain, notably the East End of London and the North of England. The key event so far has been the establishment in 2003 of the so-called Respect Coalition (or “Respect” for short), whose members are largely drawn from the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the hard-line Muslim Association of Britain (MAB). Led by George Galloway, the egregious MP for Bethnal Green and Bow who famously paid tribute to Saddam Hussein’s “strength, courage and indefatigability”,² Respect has cheerfully stooped to all manner of political roguery in its quest for influence. Its members have openly supported the fascist insurgency in Iraq, blamed the British government for the terrorist attacks in London in July 2005, defended the veil and the burqa as legitimate expressions of religious faith and denounced the Danish cartoonists for exercising their right to free speech. One incident in particular exemplifies the depths to which Galloway and his supporters have sunk. At the London demonstrations against Israel’s intervention in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, they carried placards whose slogan made their support for clerical fascism resoundingly clear: “We are all Hezbollah now”. Not since the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 have revolutionary socialists co-sided up to the far right as outrageously as this.

“Marxism possesses a number of characteristics which frequently make it attractive to the authoritarian mind...”

How has this Happened?

Despite the crimes that were committed in its name in the twentieth century, Marxism remains one of the most libertarian of modern belief systems. Not for nothing did Marx and Engels describe their vision of a communist society as one in which “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.”³ This makes it all the more bewildering that so many Western socialists should have embraced Islamofascism as enthusiastically as they have. How can it all be explained? Why on earth do the likes of Galloway, Tariq Ali and John Pilger support a movement whose main objectives are to re-

establish the medieval Caliphate, institute the most austere and repressive form of Sharia law, destroy Western democracy and stone adulterers, infidels and homosexuals to death? The ostensible reason is their hostility to American “imperialism”. Committed to the view that revolutionary change can never occur when some nations are dominated by others, they argue (or at least imply) that Islamic extremism is well worth supporting so long as it gives Washington a bloody nose. When ordinary Muslims are murdered on the streets of Baghdad by suicide bombers (or when Iraqi communists and trade unionists are butchered by disciples of Osama Bin Laden), they go along with it on the grounds that “support for a movement for liberation should not depend on those who lead it at a particular point in time.”⁴ Yet it is surely clear that other, more fundamental explanations also need to be canvassed. What I want to suggest here is that the rapprochement between Islamism and Marxism reflects some disconcerting similarities between the two systems of thought. For all its intellectual majesty and libertarian fervour, Marxism possesses a number of characteristics which frequently make it attractive to the authoritarian mind—a fact which the inglorious history of “actually existing socialism” tragically bears out. Several of these characteristics are also present in Islamic doctrine, where they have caused similar problems. Recognising at some level that authoritarian Muslims behave as they do because they hold similar beliefs to their own, Marxists of a certain stripe have their worst political instincts immeasurably strengthened. The result is a monstrous perversion of a great ideology.⁵

A Tendency Towards Totalitarianism

Let me give a few examples of what I mean, beginning with the crucial issue of the role of politics. As is well known, Islam differs from the other world religions in refusing to distinguish between the religious and the political. At its core is the belief that the main duty of Muslims is to use the terrestrial authorities to intervene in every sphere of life, reshaping even the most private forms of behaviour in accordance with the will of Allah. Whereas the secular democracies in Europe, Asia and the Americas seek to impose strict limits on the power of the state, Muslims assert that it is only through the extensive deployment of political power that “intimations of sacred transcendence” can be achieved. Much that is wrong with the modern Middle East can be traced to this outlook. If the majority of the

region's governments seem incapable of tolerating criticism, respecting the rights of women or sustaining a lively scientific culture, it is not only because Western imperialism is miring their territories in a state of permanent underdevelopment. The more important reason is that the political class regard themselves as the earthly representatives of Allah and are happy to crush anyone who doubts it.

At first sight there would appear to be no Marxist equivalent of the Muslim worship of the state. Far from seeking to concentrate power in the hands of a few pious men, Marxists look forward to an age in which the masses rule and the state simply "fades away". And yet, as anyone who has watched some of the crankier elements on an anti-war march has reason to know, the fringes of the Marxist left are full of noisy mavericks who pay fervent homage to Assad's Syria, Ahmadinejad's Iran or Gadaffi's Libya. Marked out by their lack of humour and the fixity of their stares, they seem to experience a palpable rush of sadistic pleasure at the thought of Muslim soldiers cracking the skulls of their political opponents. The thing which most obviously binds them to Islamic extremism is their political monomania. In the spirit of Islamofascist ideologues like Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb or Hassan Al Turabi, they insist on equating the whole of human existence with the sphere of politics. This draws our attention to an important similarity between the Islamic conception of government and the Marxist theory of social organisation. Whereas Islam seeks to bring all aspects of life under the authority of the confessional state, Marxism specialises in identifying traces of the political at every level of society. Its celebrated doctrine of "base and superstructure", elucidated in its canonical form in Marx's "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), famously asserts that "the economic structure of society [constitutes] the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness."⁷ No matter how remote from the centres of power a particular thought, practice or institution may seem, its ultimate purpose is usually to shore up support for the existing economic system.⁸ The

drawback with this undeniably fertile insight is that it is peculiarly vulnerable to authoritarian distortion. Once it has been absorbed by people with a certain cast of mind, it is only a matter of time until the demand for absolute political power is put on the agenda. If capitalism has penetrated to every corner of modern life, or so the argument seems to go, then surely we need a state which can pursue it ruthlessly until the last vestiges of its influence have been crushed? Such is the logic that allows the *Koran* to be conflated with *Das Kapital*.

Equality Betrayed

Another thing which occasionally brings out the worst in both Marxists and Muslims is their peculiar attitude towards equality. While subscribing in theory to the belief that all men are equal, many of them are inclined in practice to behave with violent snobbery. The root of the problem is that Islam and Marxism both contain second-order beliefs which cut across their primary commitment to equality, producing a tendency (though only a tendency) to divide humanity into the deserving few and the undeserving many. In the case of Islam the problem reaches back to its earliest years. When a

Muslim is asked to justify the claim that his faith is more egalitarian than any other, he is likely to refer to Muhammad's opposition to the treatment of the poor in seventh-century Mecca. Appalled by the greed of the new class of Arab merchants, or so it is claimed, Muhammad embraced a monotheistic creed in order to inspire (or scare) his fellow countrymen into an awareness of their mutual obligations. One of the most powerful expressions of his belief in equality was his insistence that all Muslims should pay alms to the poor, thereby protecting the faith against internal dissension. But there is an obvious contradiction at the heart of this doctrine. If a movement obliges its adherents to share their wealth with the destitute, *it presupposes that they are not destitute themselves*. Undeniably sincere in his sympathy for the poor, Muhammad fell into the trap of setting himself up as their saviour rather than their representative. The consequences for men less spiritually scrupulous than himself have often been disastrous. For every Muslim who has discharged his responsi-



"... many of them are inclined in practice to behave with violent snobbery."

bilities to the poor in a spirit of compassion and humility, there have probably been several others who have revelled in their status as “saviours” and felt nothing but contempt for the people they claim to be saving. One need only think of Saddam Hussein in his presidential palaces, gazing out with glassy eyed indifference at his utterly ruined people, to realise what this can lead to.⁹

Vanguardism and Ideological Certainty

While some Marxists would undoubtedly dismiss the giving of alms as a species of “reformism”, they too have their sources of spiritual pride. Among the most important is the doctrine of the “vanguard party” which many of them have taken over uncritically from the work of Lenin. According to Lenin, who spelled out his arguments in his legendary pamphlet *What is to be Done?* (1902), ordinary people are incapable of understanding the case for socialism without receiving assistance from outside. The responsibility for imbuing them with political consciousness lies with a tightly organised party, consisting entirely of “professional revolutionaries”, whose role is to guide them with a firm hand as they perform their historic function of overthrowing capitalism. If this idea has exerted an enormous and largely beneficial influence on modern history, not least because the Russian and Chinese Revolutions would have been unthinkable without it, it has also proved spectacularly susceptible to the law of unintended consequences. In any group of people who regard themselves as a vanguard, a certain proportion will invariably fall prey to the most lunatic forms of egotism. Just as the Islamic radical secretly feels superior to the poor, so the infantile Marxist scorns the working-class for their lack of theoretical sophistication. In the worst cases this can sometimes lead to what Rosa Luxemburg once described as “substitutionism”—that is, the belief that the Marxist elite can ignore the working class altogether and create a new society on their own. The bloody and sadistic histories of Sendera Luminosa in Peru, the Baader-Meinhoff Gang in Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy tell us everything we need to know about this sort of insanity.¹⁰

All of which brings us to the other great similarity between Islam and Marxism—the tendency to induce a crippling level of ideological certainty in their less thoughtful followers. Read an article by a member of Respect or a communiqué from Hezbollah and one thing

becomes immediately apparent: These people have never doubted anything in their lives. Cocooned in world in which every truth is self-evident and every opponent a troublemaker, they utterly lack the sort of intellectual humility which makes democracy possible. But why? The main source of Islamist dogmatism is probably the perceived status of the Koran. Unlike Christianity, Hinduism or the other world religions, Islam insists that its holy book provides a direct record of the word of God. When Muhammad went into one of his famous trances and a “new Arab scripture [started] pouring from his lips”,¹¹ or so the argument goes, he was channelling the thoughts of Allah in all their ethical grandeur. Anyone who doubts the Koran’s teachings is therefore guilty of the grossest blasphemy, even if Muhammad himself believed that some of his outpourings were dictated by satanic forces and had to be discarded.¹² By contrast, the most powerful engine of ideological bigotry on the left is what Tony Judt has called Marxism’s “sheer epistemological cheek”.¹³ Equipped with an ideology which purports to explain everything from the “transition from ape to man” (Engels) to the events of the present day, it is very difficult for a certain type of person to resist the conclusion that he knows everything there is to know. It hardly needs saying that one of the best-known examples of this personality type is Joseph Stalin.

Against “Fundamentalism”

Let us not exaggerate the problem. The majority of the world’s Muslims are similar to the majority of the world’s Marxists: tolerant, compassionate and sincere. But the alliance between the authoritarian deadbeats of the revolutionary left and the Islamofascist right is not to be taken lightly. It is not simply individuals who are judged by the company they keep. The more that Marxism and Islam allow their margins to be clogged up by bigots, the greater the likelihood that their virtues will be obscured. If the genuine members of both faiths wish to rescue themselves from obloquy, they have no choice but to police their borders more rigorously. Their only option is to put up some barbed wire, employ a few security guards and display a clearly marked sign: “No Fundamentalists Allowed”.

Notes

(1) Among the writers who have commented most perceptively on this phenomenon are Christopher Hitchens, Norman Geras, Oliver

“The only option is to... display a clearly marked sign: ‘No Fundamentalists Allowed’.”

Kamm, Melanie Phillips, Nick Cohen and David Aaronovitch. See, in particular, Cohen's recent book *What's Left? How Liberals Lost Their Way* (London: Fourth Estate, 2007).

(2) For Galloway's pitifully unconvincing excuse for his sycophancy towards Saddam, see his autobiography *I'm Not the Only One* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 106f.

(3) Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 60.

(4) Chris Harman, "Why Opposing Imperialism Means Supporting Resistance", *Socialist Review*, December 2006. Harman is a leading member of the Socialist Workers Party and Respect.

(5) I had better make it clear that I am not arguing that Islam and Marxism both contain "totalitarian" elements which make them inherently despotic. For an interesting but unconvincing discussion of this thesis, see Caroline Cox and John Marks, *The "West", Islam and Islamism: Is Ideological Islam Compatible with Liberal Democracy?* (London: Civitas, 2003).

(6) Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (London: Phoenix, 2001), p. 6.

(7) Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1981), p. 20.

(8) It goes without saying that I am grossly oversimplifying a very complex doctrine at this point.

(9) Nor should one suppose that it is only the Islamic ruling class which feels contempt for the poor. I vividly remember a Muslim doctor

of my acquaintance telling me that "I work hard for my money. Why should I give it to losers on the street?"

(10) There is also an interesting parallel between Islamic attitudes towards non-believers and Marxist attitudes towards the ruling class. Neither the Muslim extremist nor the infantile Marxist is much impressed by the idea of equality before the law. The more doctrinaire Islamic governments explicitly assign non-believers to second-class or "dhimmi" status, offering protection in return for a special tax and truncated legal rights. By the same token, especially in the Trotskyist movement, there are still legions of Marxists who believe that socialist societies should withhold the basic political liberties from "pro-capitalist" forces.

(11) Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

(12) This is a reference to the so-called *Satanic Verses* which caused Salman Rushdie such problems.

(13) Tony Judt, "Goodbye to All That?", *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 53 No. 14, September 21 2006.



Philip Bounds holds a PhD in Politics from the University of Wales. He is the author of *British Communism and Literary Theory* (2007), *Cultural Studies* (1999) and *Orwell and Culture: The Dialogue with British Marxism* (forthcoming). His essays, articles and reviews have appeared in a wide range of journals and newspapers.

Tatchell's courage...

Following the assault on Peter Tatchell at a gay rights rally in Moscow, SIF chairman, Michael Plumbe, had the following letter printed in *The Times* on the 1st June 2007...

"Had it been a Russian gay man who was punched, it would have been reported locally only. The authorities would have taken no notice. Because Peter Tatchell came from England, the incident drew worldwide attention. This kind of action, making the authorities realise that their regime is thought of as illiberal outside their country as well as within, is far more likely to bring about speedy change than protests by Russians alone. Tatchell is a brave, effective man."

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF AYN RAND (1905-1982)

Peter Richards

Introduction

As astonishing as Elvis—that's how Jenny Turner described Ayn Rand in her review of the biography *Ayn Rand* by Jeff Britting.¹ She was expressing how she believed 1950s teenagers in small-town America would have been struck by Ayn Rand and her ideas.

In a survey conducted in the early 1990s in the USA, when people were asked which book they were most influenced by, Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* came second only to the Bible.

Ayn Rand's books have sold more than 30 million copies worldwide. Her novels, all of which were published during her lifetime, are still in print, despite the fact that the earliest of these, *We the Living*, dates back to 1936.

In view of the fact that she is one of the best-selling authors of all time, it is I think surprising that the name Ayn Rand still remains obscure.

So who is this astonishing person, whose ideas have been so influential, and whose books have sold in such vast numbers, and who, despite all of this, many people have never heard of? Who is Ayn Rand?

To answer this question and to outline her lifetime achievements, I will begin with a brief biography.

Early life in Russia

Ayn (rhymes with 'mine') Rand was the name she chose for herself when she emigrated to America at the age of 21, but she was born Alisa Rosenbaum on the 2nd February 1905 in St Petersburg, Russia. She came from a well-to-do Russian Jewish family who owned a pharmacy business.

Ayn was a clever and determined child. By the age of 6 she had taught herself to read and by the age of 9 she had decided to become a fiction writer.

One of her earliest influences was Cyrus Paltons, the hero of a French strip cartoon, who

represented a heroic ideal that she carried with her into adulthood.

The Rosenbaums' property overlooked Znamenskaya Square. It was looking out onto this large public square that Ayn, at just 12 years old, witnessed the first shots being fired of the Russian Revolution in February 1917. Her father became a victim of the political upheaval caused by the October Revolution later that same year, when his pharmacy was forcibly confiscated by the Bolsheviks. The family endured extreme poverty as a direct result of the revolution and of the Soviets' seizure of her father's means of earning a living.

The family fled to the Crimea in order to escape the fighting. It is here that, on continuing her education at high school, Ayn was introduced to American history. It was also about this time that she discovered the Romantic novelists. Her favourite writer was Victor Hugo, who she was later to regard as the finest novelist of world literature. She also acquired a passion for cinema and for Western films in particular.

At high school Ayn learned about Aristotle, who was to become Rand's favourite philosopher.

Rand's family returned to Petrograd (previously known as St. Petersburg) in 1921. Ayn took the precaution of burning her diary, which contained anti-Soviet comments, to avoid being punished had it fallen into the hands of the authorities.

Ayn Rand then entered the University of Petrograd to study history with philosophy, and graduated three years later in 1924. After that, she enrolled at the State Institute for Cinema Arts to study screen writing.

Rand's writing achievements started with the publication in Russian of *Pola Negri* in 1925. This was a sketch of the silent era movie actress, Pola Negri.

But life in Russia since the revolution was grim and Ayn longed to get away. Suffocated by the oppressive atmosphere in the USSR, Ayn

"... Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* came second only to the Bible."

applied for a visa to visit relatives in America and this was granted late in 1925.

To America and Fiction Writing

Ayn was 21 years old when she arrived in New York in February 1926, determined never to return to the Soviet Union. She stayed for six months in Chicago with relatives before moving on to Hollywood with her newly chosen name 'Ayn Rand'.

Astonishingly, she met Cecil B. DeMille on her second day in Hollywood, at the gate of his studio, and he offered her a lift to the set of his movie *The King of Kings*. He gave her a job as an extra and then later as a junior screenwriter.

The following week she met the actor Frank O'Connor, whose appearance showed a remarkable resemblance to her childhood fictional hero, Cyrus Paltons. The couple were married in 1929, and Fluff (Ayn) and Cubbyhole (Frank), as they called each other, stayed together until Frank's death 50 years later.

The beginning of Rand's successful writing career was marked by the sale of her first script *Red Pawn* to Universal Studios in 1932. Her first stage play *Night of January 16th* was produced in Hollywood in 1934 and then on Broadway the following year.

Rand's first novel, *We the Living*, was completed in 1934 but was rejected by many publishers, before finally being accepted by Macmillan in 1936.

It describes the brutality of life in Russia under Soviet tyranny. The novel is set in the Russia of 1917 and describes the struggle of an idealistic young heroin, Kira, against the newly formed totalitarian state of the Communist regime.

As Ayn states in the forward: "*We the Living* is as near to an autobiography as I will ever write."²

The theme of *We the Living*, according to Rand is: "The supreme value of a human life and the evil of a totalitarian state that claims the right to sacrifice it."³

In the early days Rand had difficulty in getting her books published. Her second novel, *Anthem*, often described as a novella, because of its short length, was first published in England

in 1938, but did not find an American publisher until 1946.

The story is set in a bleak future where people are governed by a totalitarian collectivist state. It is a world where the word 'I' has completely gone out of use, only to be rediscovered later in the text by the book's hero, Equality 7-2521, when he escapes to the 'Uncharted Forest'.

It is fascinating to consider that that this book was written some ten years before Orwell's *1984*, and that the theme is a similar one. The most marked difference between the two is that in *Anthem*, the technological advances of civilisation have disappeared, alongside the loss of individualism, whereas in *1984*, the technology remains sophisticated and indeed aids the suppression of individualism.

Both *We the Living* and *Anthem* are novels about man against the state. Rand's working title for *Anthem* was *Ego* and a more explanatory title would have been *Anthem to the Ego*.

Rand's next book *The Fountainhead* was rejected by no fewer than 12 publishers before it was eventually published in 1943. It took two years before it became a best seller and that was through word of mouth. This book presents a slightly different theme from her previous two books; instead of being anti-totalitarianism, it is pro-individualism. The title comes from Rand's maxim that: "Man's ego is the fountainhead of human progress."⁴

Rand tells us that the book's theme is: "Individualism versus collectivism, not in politics but in man's soul."⁵ The leading character is the brilliant modern architect, Howard Roark, who dares to stand alone against the powers of conformity. Despite much hostility directed towards him, his integrity remains intact. By championing individualism, the novel presents man as "he could be and ought to be".

The Fountainhead later became a Hollywood film in 1949 starring Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal and Rand wrote the screenplay.

Magnum Opus

Atlas Shrugged is Ayn Rand's *magnum opus* or great masterwork. It was published in 1957 and took 14 years to write. The novel begins with the famous line, "Who is John Galt?" The book is an intellectual mystery story

"By championing individualism, the novel presents man as 'he could be and ought to be'."

which also reveals Rand's philosophical beliefs. The working title for the novel was *The Strike* and its theme is: "The role of the mind in man's existence—and as a corollary, the demonstration of a new moral philosophy: the morality of rational self-interest."⁶

In the novel, men of talent—industrialists, scientists, inventors and composers—all disappear. The economy and society in general start to collapse. Everything becomes run down. The government passes anti-business legislation, which only makes matters worse. John Galt plans this global strike of all great minds, in his retreat deep in the Rocky Mountains.

The power of the book is that it draws attention to the value to society of productive geniuses and prime movers, by considering what would happen if they all suddenly disappeared.

Atlas Shrugged became an international best seller and still sells thousands of copies every year.

Objectivism and Non-Fiction Writing

When *Atlas Shrugged* was published, it received a cool reception from academia, which provoked Rand into finding a way of promoting the philosophy behind the book, a philosophy which she called Objectivism: a philosophy for living on Earth. She did this by way of radio and television appearances, lectures and talks.

With her striking appearance and her strong views, she soon became a media celebrity. She was interviewed for *Playboy* magazine (1964) and appeared on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show* (1967).

She surrounded herself with a group of like-minded individuals, which was jokingly called 'The Collective'. This included, amongst others, Nathaniel Branden, a psychologist; the clarinet player and economist Alan Greenspan, who later became chairman of the United States Federal Reserve board; and Leonard Peikoff, a philosopher and Rand's legal and intellectual heir.

Nathaniel Branden formed the Nathaniel Branden Institute (NBI) in 1958 to lecture on 'Objectivist Philosophy'. Rand did have a brief romantic liaison with Branden but later

fell out with him on a matter of principle, which led to the closure of the NBI in 1968.

Rand launched the *Objectivist Newsletter* in 1962, which was replaced by the periodical *The Objectivist* in 1966. This was followed by the *Ayn Rand Letter* (1971-1976). Rand contributed numerous articles to these publications, many of which were put together in a series of anthologies, making a total of 7 non-fiction books, all of which were published during her lifetime, with the exception of *Philosophy: Who Needs It*.

Rand's Objectivism countered Marxism by offering Capitalism with its moral justification.

Ayn Rand died on the 6th March 1982.

Posthumous Achievements

Ayn Rand's literary legacy is that her books, both fiction and non-fiction, are still conveying her inspirational ideas into the 21st century. A click on the Amazon.com website will reveal that all of her novels and most of her non-fiction books are still available to buy on the Internet. Out-of-print non-fiction titles may also be purchased on E-bay; as well as rare, collectable and signed copies of other Ayn Rand works.

If you use the Google search engine, you will find more than 2 million references to Ayn Rand on the web. The most informative of which are The Ayn Rand Institute (ARI),⁷ a 'purist' promoter of Randian Ideas, and The Objectivist Center,⁸ which has a less rigid and more open approach to Objectivism. With all this Internet presence, Rand's ideas are not about to go away.



Ayn Rand's political legacy is that her ideas still inspire and inform classical liberal and libertarian think-tanks. The world's second largest libertarian web site is hosted by Britain's free market and civil liberties think tank, the Libertarian Alliance,⁹ whose founder, the late Dr Chris Tame, had publicly expressed his admiration for Ayn Rand as a thinker and writer. Ayn Rand's powerful intellectual influence pervades the libertarian movement. "Without Ayn Rand," said David Nolan, the original founder of the Libertarian Party, "the libertarian movement would not exist."¹⁰

"... Rand's literary legacy is that her books... are still conveying her inspirational ideas into the 21st century."

I think Roderick T. Long was right when he said of Ayn Rand that she was, "One of the 20th Century's foremost voices of freedom",¹¹ and I would add that I believe her positive message of individual freedom will continue to spread well into the 21st Century.

Notes

- (1) Jenny Turner, review of *Ayn Rand* by Jeff Britting, *London Review of Books*, vol. 27, no. 23, 1st December 2005.
- (2) Ayn Rand, *We the Living*, (60th anniversary edition), Signet, New York, 1996, p. xvii.
- (3) Jeff Britting, *Ayn Rand*, Overlook Duckworth, London, 2004, p. 39.
- (4) *Ibid*, sleeve notes.
- (5) *Ibid*, p. 51.
- (6) *Ibid*, p. 79.
- (7) www.aynrand.org.
- (8) www.objectivistcenter.org.
- (9) www.libertarian.co.uk. The world's largest

libertarian website is the CATO Institute at www.cato.org.

(10) Barbara Branden, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, Anchor Books, New York, 1987, p. 414. The Libertarian Party referred to is the 3rd largest political party in the USA.

(11) Roderick T. Long, 'Ayn Rand's Contribution to the Cause of Freedom', blog posted 2nd February 2005 (the centenary of Ayn Rand's birth), at the Ludwig von Mises Institute website, www.mises.org.



Peter Richards is a Hampshire businessman and writer. Besides being a member of the SIF, he is a life member of the Rationalist Press Association, and a member or subscriber of the British Humanist Association, the Freedom Association and the Libertarian Alliance. He has also contributed to *The Freethinker*, the Libertarian Alliance and *Right Now!*



Socialist fat cats...

The plain fact is that fat comes from food and it is impossible to remain overweight or obese... without maintaining a high intake of food...

At a time of severe rationing of food [just after the Second World War], Nye Bevan, the Minister of Health, was grossly overweight. So was Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary. Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, was not much better and even Harold Wilson, a junior minister, was certainly not slim. Where did all the food come from to maintain the body weight of these socialist fat cats? It certainly cannot have come from whatever they could have purchased through their ration books.

Dr Robert Lefever, www.robortlefever.co.uk, 31st May 2007

Alcohol labelling, over-regulation and medical fashion...

SIF President, Lord Monson, made the following valuable contribution on the 20th April 2007 to the *Alcohol Labelling Bill*. Along the way he made telling points about “medical fashion”.

The full text of the debate can be found at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200607/ldhansrd/text/70420-0004.htm#07042032000135>.

Courtesy dictates that this Bill should receive an unopposed Second Reading, but I hope it will not go much further, certainly not in its present form. As my noble friend Lord Walton of Detchant said only a couple of days ago when speaking in a health debate:

“My Lords, we are in serious danger of living in a grossly over-regulated society” [Official Report, 18/4/07; col. 289.]

There is no empirical evidence that for the great majority, taking alcohol in moderation—one must stress the word—during pregnancy nor my siblings would be here today contemporaries. The same goes, I noble Lord, Lord Mitchell, said that

a survey had revealed that 61 per cent of pregnant women admitted to drinking. I would have thought that probably more like 90 per cent, the difference being that pregnant women would restrict their drinking to a glass of sherry or half a pint of mild at one end of the social scale up to a dry martini or a glass of scotch at the other. Binge drinking simply did not happen, except perhaps at university after finals or something like that. It is a modern phenomenon which was then unknown, and I agree that it is a serious one. I shall come back to that issue in a moment.



harms the unborn child. If it did, neither I to tell the tale, and nor would most of my think, for my sons' generation. The noble Lord, Lord Mitchell, said that

cent of pregnant women admitted to 40, 50, 60 or 70 years ago it was probably more like 90 per cent, the difference being that pregnant women would restrict their drinking to a glass of sherry or half a pint of mild at one end of the social scale up to a dry martini or a glass of scotch at the other. Binge drinking simply did not happen, except perhaps at university after finals or something like that. It is a modern phenomenon which was then unknown, and I agree that it is a serious one. I shall come back to that issue in a moment.

Not so long ago, doctors and district nurses would urge nursing mothers to drink a pint of Guinness a day for the sake of their health and that of their baby. Medical fashions change from year to year, and indeed from month to month. We were told not long ago that butter was a deadly poison and we must all switch to margarine. The position has totally reversed and now margarine with its hydrogenated fats is the villain of the piece while butter in moderation is perfectly all right.

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

A decade before that, antibiotics were prescribed for everything under the sun—for anything from a scratched finger to a boil on the bum. That has resulted in people becoming desensitised to antibiotics so they no longer work. A decade earlier, anyone feeling slightly down in the dumps was prescribed tranquillisers, and hundreds of thousands were prescribed to ill effect. A couple of decades before then, asbestos was considered God's gift to mankind. You were doing a public service by lining your house or place of business with as much asbestos as possible. Now we know better. Medical and health fashions do change.

In two or three years' time it may well be decided that on balance it is beneficial once again for pregnant women to have a single glass of red wine a day, but that would be a bit too late if this Bill goes through.

get the wrong people. women are having babies for economic reasons, and are Once pregnant they are women to complications. avoid drink, and often



Moreover, the Bill would target Young, university-educated later and later, mainly for economic reasons, finding it harder to conceive. more prone than younger So they will usually religiously tea and coffee as well. The

Bill is not necessary for them. Women from a more feckless background—the binge drinkers to whom the noble Lord, Lord Mitchell, referred—are likely to do most of their drinking in pubs and clubs. When they buy bottles, they are unlikely to peruse the labels carefully.

That brings me, lastly, to an aesthetic objection. The noble Lord, Lord Mitchell, talked about Château Lafite 1982. Imagine how terrible it would have been if those marvellous Château Mouton Rothschilds—I have only tasted it once—with their magnificent labels designed by Dufy, Matisse, Picasso and so on, had been ruined by ugly warnings plastered all over them, especially when such warnings are not really necessary, and certainly not on the front of the bottle.



A MILESTONE ON THE POLITICAL JOURNEY OF A LIBERTARIAN: A BRIEF WORD ABOUT PETER TATCHELL

Nigel Meek

I've never written a "How I became a Libertarian" essay. Or, rather, that should probably be "How I realised, bit-by-bit, that I was a Libertarian". But along the way I can recall a number of significant incidents—a speech listened to, a book read, a particular event and so on—which had an important and lasting impact on me.

Elsewhere in this issue of *The Individual* we reprint the text of a letter that SIF chairman Mike Plumbé had published in *The Times* in June this year. In it he praised the courage of gay rights activist, Peter Tatchell. I, too, had an essay on much the same subject—the villain that time being the loathsome dictator of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe—published in *The Times* in March 2001.

Back in the early 1980s I was an apparently orthodox Thatcherite. I supported "privatisation" and "monetarism" inasmuch as I understood either of them at the time, supported the anti-trades union legislation, was a Cold War Hawk and unlike much of the Labour Party was a staunch supporter of the UK's membership of what was then the EEC. Upon reflection I was wrong about some things!

But in early 1983 came one of these "significant events". For various reasons, the sitting Labour MP for Bermondsey, Robert Mellish, resigned, thus forcing a by-election. Some readers will remember that this was the heyday of the "loony left" where the Labour Party seemed to be represented by a never-ending parade of deeply unlovely characters, many of who seemed to long for the Berlin Wall being moved a good deal to the West. Sure enough, the Labour Party's candidate for the by-election, who had been selected as early as 1981, seemed right out of the mould: Peter Tatchell, an Australian-born but long British-domiciled "hard left", gay rights campaigner.

It was as much for this last aspect of his beliefs and activities, despite his own attempts to "go back into the closet", that at the time particu-

larly elicited the opprobrium of the mainstream media and even the leadership of the Labour Party. He was the victim of an appallingly vicious campaign aimed at his (correctly) presumed sexuality. That this campaign would be enthusiastically echoed by the eventually victorious Liberals would only add insult to injury. For only much later—although I knew long before he was "outed" during the Liberal Democrat leadership contest in 2006—would it emerge that the winner, Simon Hughes, was himself gay.

As much as I loathed Tatchell for his ideological views, I remember being incensed—and I mean incandescently angry—by the (to use the more modern term) homophobic nature of the campaign against him. He deserved to be defeated because he believed some very silly and indeed harmful things. He did *not* deserve to be defeated because of his sexuality. It struck me as a dreadful injustice.

I should say that as far as I can see from a casual reading of the press and his own writings, Tatchell continues to be as ideologically wrong as he was in the early 1980s, even in areas directly related to sexuality. He still seems to support "identity politics" whereby a person is substantially defined by their sexuality. This goes against the liberal (in the SIF's sense) notion of individualism, individual liberty, personal responsibility and judging each according to their own merits.

He also still seems to cling to the Marxist-derived belief that "who we are" is mainly environmentally determined by our upbringing in one way and another. This appears to be part of his attempt to deny the "normality" of heterosexuality. No serious psychologist believes this, nor has done so for a very long time. That "who we are" is substantially down to who our biological parents were is beyond doubt, although it is also true that our upbringing—and who would dispute it?—counts for much as well. (I leave out the issue of free will!) In any case, not even an ardent libertarian such as myself—and, after all, this is where

"He did *not* deserve to be defeated because of his sexuality."

this essay started—disputes that heterosexuality is “normal” in its statistical sense. To suggest otherwise is to fly in the face of eons of sexual reproduction amongst higher animals!

Given that he was recently adopted as the Green Party’s parliamentary candidate for Oxford East, it is also safe to say that he hasn’t converted to the cause of free-market economics.

But I came to praise not to bury! The point is that back in 1983, still in my late teens and probably before I’d even heard the term “libertarian”, it was becoming clear to me that I didn’t fit into the typical political “packages” that seemed on offer at the time. It was only a few years later that, to my despair since there were vastly more important things to be done, the Conservative government would engage in its own nasty and in fact utterly pointless bit of homophobic posturing—although there were other reasons as well—with what was sometimes known as “Section 28”, the law to ban the “promotion” of homosexuality.

As I said: a milestone.

In the meantime, as our Chairman points out in his letter to *The Times*, Tatchell continues to display real physical courage in defending at least his own corner of freedom.

One final word. Whilst I had/have little time for many of the political views of Tatchell *et al*, one of the few areas in which I did was, obviously, certain areas to do with “civil liberties”. It is a neat coincidence that in this issue of *The Individual* we carry an essay by Dr Philip Bounds where he describes the abandonment of such beliefs by those who once held them. You want sucking up to homophobic, misogynist anti-Semites? No problem, providing that they’re suitably anti-US or anti-Israeli!



Nigel Meek is the editor and/or membership secretary of the SIF, the Libertarian Alliance (www.libertarian.co.uk) and the Campaign Against Censorship (www.dlas.org.uk). These days he is a recovering Tory.

“Tatchell continues to display real physical courage...”



Apologising for the Slave Trade...

“The latest outbreak of corporate insanity is the widespread apologising for the Slave Trade. We no longer live in a moral realm where political decisions are made after a period of studied reflection. We inhabit a sound-bite world of sentimental imaginings triggering hysterical responses. We have apologised for the Slave Trade already by abolishing the Slave Trade in the British Empire. The best apology there could ever be... We should be celebrating the moral courage and generosity of spirit of our forebears who carried it out.”

Peter Mullen, ‘Eternal Life’, *The Salisbury Review*, Summer 2007, p. 34.

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The SIF's Aim:

"To promote responsible individual freedom"

The SIF is a classical liberal organisation that believes in the economic and personal freedom of the individual, subject only to the equal freedom of others.

The SIF promotes...

- ✓ The freedom, importance and personal responsibility of the individual.
- ✓ The sovereignty of Parliament and its effective control over the Executive.
- ✓ The rule of law and the independence of the Judicature.
- ✓ Free enterprise.

SIF Activities

The SIF organises public meetings featuring speakers of note, holds occasional luncheons at the Houses of Parliament, publishes this journal to which contributions are welcome, and has its own website. The SIF also has two associated campaigns: Tell-It, that seeks to make information on outcomes of drugs and medical treatments more widely known and available to doctors and patients alike, and Choice in Personal Safety (CIPS), that opposes seatbelt compulsion and similar measures.

Joining the SIF

If you broadly share our objectives and wish to support our work, then please write to us at the address on this page, enclosing a cheque for £15 (minimum) made payable to the Society for Individual Freedom.

The Law of Equal Freedom

*"Every man has freedom to do all that he wills,
provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man."*

Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics*, 1851